

The House on Thursday morning approved a 90-day extension of federal highway programs over the objections of angry Democrats. The Senate on Thursday afternoon also passed the extension. The bill will now go to President Obama. The White House has indicated the president will sign the bill.

The House approved its bill, H.R. 4281, in a 266-158 vote that saw 37 Democrats join all but 10 Republicans in passing it — a fair amount of bipartisanship given the bitter debate heard in the House throughout much of the week.

Because the House plans to leave for recess at the end of Thursday, the Republican bill was daring Senate Democrats to reject the bill just days before federal authorization expires. The Senate however passed the measure, accepting a short-term solution leaders in the upper chamber vehemently opposed.

The measure, H.R. 4281, now goes to President Obama. It extends the current funding for road and transit projects until June 30, the ninth-such continuance of the last multi-year highway authorization that was approved by Congress, which expired in 2009.

The approval of the highway funding stopgap averts an interruption in the federal government's authorization to collect the 18.4 cent-per-gallon gas tax, which had been set to expire Saturday. The money is traditionally used to fund transportation projects.

Even as they were approving the measure in an anti-climatic voice vote, Democrats sharply criticized Republicans for not accepting a two-year, \$109 billion version of the transportation measure the Senate had approved on a bipartisan vote earlier this month.

"If the House had a bill, this would be a negotiation between two bills," Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) said during debate on the temporary extension on the Senate floor.

"The problem is they don't have a bill," Landrieu continued. "They have ideas, they have

speeches, they have platforms, but they don't have a bill. We couldn't negotiate with them even if we wanted to."

But House Republicans knew they were putting intense pressure on the Senate to find some way to ensure federal highway funding continues after Saturday, one that would also allow it to save face in light of the House decision to send its temporary fix over at the last minute.

This dynamic, in which the House is once again pushing its solution at the Senate, had Democrats enraged during Thursday's debate on the bill. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) earlier in the week said of some Republicans that they must "hate America," and on Thursday, he said some Republicans are "bozos" for apparently wanting to reject the idea of a national transportation program altogether.

"We're going to lose half of the proposed projects this construction season around America, tens of thousands of jobs, needed investment, because they got a bunch of bozos in their caucus that don't believe we should have a national transportation system," he said.

At another point, Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) went on a rant for a full minute beyond his allotted speaking time, forcing presiding officer Rep. Charlie Bass (R-N.H.) to announce that he was no longer recognized.

"This kind of cold-blooded political calculation, to use the jobs of American working people as political cannon fodder for your agenda to defeat the Obama administration, is outrageous," Miller said as Bass started to bang the gavel. "It should be rejected by your party, it should be rejected by my party."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) also criticized the short-term extension as one that would continue to throw uncertainty into the jobs of thousands of Americans, a point many other Democrats were making. Pelosi also noted that the House Republican budget resolution, up later on Thursday, would cut transportation funding in future years.

"In the budget that they're going to be voting on today, they have cut transportation funding in

half, from \$90 billion to \$46 billion," she said. "That's \$44 billion worth of jobs, promotion of commerce, improving the quality of life of the American people, building the infrastructure of America."

As they have all week, Republicans painted Democrats as members who were hyperventilating over an extension of federal highway programs, similar to the six extensions they approved when they ran the House and Senate.

"There appears to be on the other side a mass case of a loss of memory," House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.) said near the end of the debate.

Mica also defended the original House proposal to authorize federal programs for five years, and said House Republicans would continue to push for a bill that does not include the thousands of earmarks contained in past bills.

"The ... era of the biggest gorilla walking off with the most bananas is over," Mica said.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) admitted that the extension was not the outcome he and other leaders in the Democratically controlled upper chamber had sought.

"This has been a difficult time for everyone," Reid said from the floor shortly after the Senate had approved the House's transportation measure. "What we have is what none of us wanted."

Reid said he hoped that Republicans in the House would reconsider their opposition to the Senate's version of the transportation bill after the two-week recess lawmakers are scheduled to begin next week.

House Republicans voting against the 90-day extension were Reps. Justin Amash (Mich.), **John Campbell (Calif.)**

Congress Approves 90-Day Highway Bill, Sends to Obama - The Hill

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, Robert Dold (Ill.), Jeff Flake (Ariz.), John Fleming (La.), Jim Jordan (Ohio), Tom McClintock (Calif.), Jean Schmidt (Ohio), David Schweikert (Ill.) and James Sensenbrenner (Wis.).